

## UCRS NEWSLETTER - 1958

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SOCIETY ACTIVITIES - The Society meets on the first and third Fridays of each month from September to June, the third-Friday meetings are general meetings held in Room 486, Toronto Union Station, while those held on first Fridays are usually informal outdoor meetings. The next meeting of the latter type, owing to the holiday Friday, will be held on THURSDAY April 3<sup>rd</sup> at Sunnyside Station, an ideal vantage point to observe the exodus of holiday travellers. The meeting will convene at 8:00 p.m.

Past Meetings - February 21<sup>st</sup> 38 members in attendance; a showing of 8 mm. movies on steam subjects, including footage taken at the 1957 N. R. H. S. Convention at Roanoke, VA.

March 7<sup>th</sup>: 15 members at an observation gathering at West Toronto Station. This turnout was very encouraging for these meetings.

March 21<sup>st</sup>: 41 members attended this meeting, which was featured by an auction of railroadiana from the collection of Mr. A. A. Merrilees, with himself as auctioneer. Many rare and interesting railroad and marine items were added to other members' collections as a result of the auction.

The Society has made arrangements with the Toronto Transit Commission to obtain copies of the monthly take-one "*Headlight*" for mailing to members on a regular basis; the March issue is enclosed herewith. Appreciation is here expressed to the Public Relation Section of the Commission for permitting the Society to provide an extra item of interest to its members.

Also enclosed this month is *Bulletin 48* on the T.T.C.'s Brill (Preston)- built Peter Witt series 2580-2678. This is one of the series of exhaustive data sheets covering Toronto cars which will eventually form a complete roster.

### **BLOOR SUBWAY MOVES A STEP CLOSER**

On Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, after deliberations lasting several days, the Metropolitan Toronto Council endorsed the Bloor Subway project in principle by an 18 - 2 vote. No decision was made, however, to vote money for the project, and this most important step will await further conferences with the T.T.C. and with the Provincial and Dominion Governments in an effort to determine if the latter authorities will offer financial assistance. The Province has already provided some indication that assistance may be forthcoming, not for the subway directly, but by way of a subsidy for the improvement of Bloor Street by removal of surface transit vehicles. It is felt generally that the 60% - 40% split suggested by the Woods-Gordon Report and elsewhere will be abandoned in favour of requiring the T.T.C. to finance 50% of subway costs, adding \$1½ million to its yearly contribution for subway construction.

With regard to routing, the all-Bloor route (the T.T.C. proposal) has now been officially approved by Metro, and serious talk of the "U" route will probably no longer be heard. Thoughts of staging the construction program in three major steps have recently arisen. The University Avenue leg would be the first stage before any work was done on Bloor Street; the construction of the line east from Avenue Road would form stage 2, and Stage 3 would be the west end section from Avenue Road to Keele Street.

### **THOUGHTS PURSUANT TO THE KANSAS CITY PCC'S**

In the closing weeks of 1957, the Toronto Transit Commission took delivery of thirty G.M.C. 51-passenger diesel buses the vehicle which seems to be the No. 1 surface transit unit in today's picture, judging by the rate at which this make and model of bus is being added to the fleets of other properties. However, the peculiar thing about the delivery of the Toronto order was that at the very same time there was being received on the property a like number of 1946- and 1947-built all-electric PCC street cars. It would seem that the T.T.C. is one transit organization that can either take the GMC diesel bus or leave it alone, and that still respects the virtues of the No. 1 surface transit vehicle of all time, sufficiently to consider the purchase of 10-year-old units alongside the latest and best that the bus manufacturers can muster. It is abundantly evident from this that the original proponents of the PCC car, were they examining its use today could conclude that their efforts, by and large, have been successful in Toronto at least. (The writer feels that the PCC car was perhaps only an 80% success even in Toronto, and that PCC's should have been running today on such lines as Dovercourt, Weston Road and Yonge Street between Eglinton and Steeles Avenue).

This leads to the real consideration behind this article - what has been termed before this as the "*Tragedy of the PCC car*". The stark truth of the matter is that the PCC car (even if 80% successful in Toronto), considered in the overall transit picture on the North American continent from 1935 to 1958 was largely a failure. Why was it a failure? It is submitted here that it did NOT arrive too late, as has sometimes been suggested by both transit men and railfans.

An examination of the number of surface street railway companies operating in Canada and the United States in 1935 together with the miles of track and number of cars owned will quickly show that the street car still enjoyed at that time a major place in urban transit, and that a great potential existed for the sale of PCC cars.

The story of the conception and development of the PCC car is an old one, known to some degree by virtually every electric railfan. The development got its start in the late '20's, when most properties were still very much rail-minded and were genuinely interested in obtaining a much improved street car that would check the drift to private automobiles. No effort was spared by the Presidents' Conference Committee to design a car which, when mass production was ready, represented the greatest single forward stride ever made in transit vehicle design and performance. The placing on rails of such a car represented a major engineering effort.

One would have expected that the impetus from this major effort would have carried on into the sales promotion of the item upon which so much time, money and energy had already been expended. In the first few years following the initial production order from the Brooklyn & Queens Transit Corporation there was indeed much promotional material printed by the Transit Research Corporation, the car builders and the electrical equipment manufacturers, although how well this material was circulated in the industry is not known at this time. It was during this period that many of the medium-sized electric railway properties were running into obsolescence and the need to replace a large part of their plant or convert to free-wheel operation. In this climate the PCC car should have been advertised to the limit, with salesmen for the car knocking incessantly at the doors of the management of such companies.

One company caught in the obsolescence condition at this time was the Lehigh Valley Transit Company, which to the delight of thousands of railfans decided not to abandon, but to purchase and modernize dozens of second-hand city and interurban cars from other companies which were taking the apparently easy way out. Here was a ready-made case for the PCC car - if the LVT had been induced to invest its money in PCC cars to just half the number of the second-hand units it did purchase, and then to acquire further PCC's at reasonable intervals thereafter, the picture on this now all-bus system might have been very different today. The same would hold good for many another of the medium and large electric railways on this continent.

Following World War II, the bus manufacturing industry began an all-out advertising campaign to drive the street car from every street in North America, spearheaded by the Twin Coach and Timken-Detroit Axle organizations, whose advertisements definitely hit "below the belt". In response to this, what did the manufacturers of the PCC do? A few conservative ads, which by no means extolled adequately the advantages of the product, appeared in trade journals for a short time, and then petered out. The volume of expensive advertising by the bus manufacturers soon put a pro-bus bias into the editorial policy of the industry's leading trade magazine "*Mass Transportation*", and this was just about all the PCC car needed to rule it off of all but a small handful of properties that had an unshakeable faith in the car born of an already long and successful experience with it.

It is a sad commentary on the inadequacy of professional PCC promotion that desperate railfans, purely as a labour of love and paid for out of their own pockets, brought out publicity material such as the booklet "*Facts About Modern Transit*" in an attempt to fill the great gap.

About 1950 the PCC was caught by the descending vortex of economic factors that spelled the end of production of new cars. Lack of promotion had kept sales limited in the post-war years; this, together with the apparent lack of any attempt to hold down the purchase cost of new units made the price tag finally prohibitive to even the most faithful operators, and the boom in the sale of second-hand units was born. The ready market for the sale of used PCC's which existed for several years not only ended new production but made the use of the car even more limited as several systems (e.g. Detroit) that would still have been operating their cars today found a way to rid themselves of the vehicles that they obviously did not properly appreciate.

In conclusion, one may well ask whether the money and effort put into the refinement of the PCC car during the war (resulting in the post-war all-electric version) might not have been better expended in programming an all-out sales campaign to follow the lifting of production restrictions, and in studying ways and means of holding down costs on the then current air-electric design.

It is certainly difficult to believe that the all-electric design, superior though it may be, in itself sold any cars that would not have been sold had no change in design been made.

Perhaps the most permanent contribution that the years of PCC research will eventually prove to have made to the transit industry is the PCC rapid transit car now used in some American cities. Rail rapid transit would appear at this stage to have a good future, and the cars now in service using the PCC features in truck and control equipment design will probably see a long period of service; additional units will in all likelihood be built. Railfans who now tend to regard the PCC story as a tragic futility will look back with greater equanimity when they realize that the PCC street car was essentially representative of a technological advance that found its better expression in an improved form of rapid transit car moving large masses of people swiftly and economically over routes unhampered by street congestion.

S. I. W.

➤ Part Three of Forster Kemp's series of Reports on the Maritime Provinces will appear in next month's issue of the *Newsletter*.

#### THE B.C. ELECTRIC RAILWAY'S LAST PASSENGER RUN

By G. R. Hearn, Victoria, BC

**1. Last Revenue Run:** - Interurban car 1225 made its last revenue run on Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958 between Marpole and Steveston, BC, bringing to a close the once-extensive rail passenger operation of the British Columbia Electric Railway. The car left Marpole at 12:30 A.M. in charge of Conductor Laurence Lowe and Motorman Bert Hall, together with the company's Assistant Superintendent Lee Stewart. There were 68 passengers on board, consisting mostly of railfans

from Greater Vancouver, Victoria, New Westminster, Kelowna, Steveston and Richmond in BC, and Seattle, Washington. Also aboard were company security police in order to prevent over-zealous souvenir hunters from stripping to car as had happened on previous farewell trips.

Immediately on leaving Marpole the line crosses the north arm of the Fraser River by means of a swinging bridge. During the 53 years of operation countless thousands of passengers have cursed this bridge for the delays that it cause to trains. It is ironic that on the last run, both the outbound and inbound trips were delayed by the bridge being opened for river traffic.

The last inbound trip left Steveston at 1:00 A.M. and the train arrived at Marpole at 1:30 A.M. After all passengers disembarked, the car left for Kitsilano shops. The station at Marpole was officially closed to passenger service at 1:30 A.M. after almost 55 years of faithful service to the public.

**2. The Ceremonial Last Run:** - Two special 2-car trains left Marpole at 11:00 A.M. on Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958, decked out in flags and bunting and carrying invited guests, and company officials.

The trains stopped at Brighthouse (where other invited guests were picked up) and proceeded to Steveston. Still more guests boarded and the trains returned to Brighthouse were all enjoyed a farewell lunch in the Municipal Hall. After lunch, all boarded the trains and proceeded to Marpole, where the guests changed to buses to return home.

The trains left Marpole Station for Kitsilano Shops, stopping en route at 41<sup>st</sup> and Boulevard for railfans to take pictures. The first train out consisted of Trains 1231 and 1222, and the second train 1208 and 1207. The cars arrived at the shops at 3:00 P.M., 1207 on the lead train and 1231 on the rear of the second train, earning accordingly the distinction of being the last car over the line. Shop employees stripped the cars of the flags and bunting and they were parked on a siding for disposal. It is expected that certain units will be preserved by railway historical associations.

The line from Vancouver to Steveston was opened for service in 1902 by the Canadian Pacific Railway, with steam operation. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1905, it was leased to the B.C.E.R., which started electric operation on the same day, a trial run having been carried out on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

*DATA ON CARS USED ON LAST RUNS*

<u>No.</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>Control</u>	<u>Motors</u>
1207	BCER	1905	Wood, monitor roof	M	GE 204
1208	BCER	1905	Wood, monitor roof	M	GE 204
1222	St. Louis	1913	Steel, arch roof	M	
				GE 204	
1225	St. Louis	1913	Steel, arch roof	M	
				GE 204	
1231	St. Louis	1913	Steel, roof	M	GE 204

➤ (Mr. Hearn was the last fare-paying passenger on the B.C.E.R. system.)

MOTIVE POWER NOTES

➤ The Northern Alberta Railways has taken delivery of its first diesel locomotives, five GP-9's numbered 201-205. It is understood that five further similar units are on order.

➤ **C.N.R. Deliveries:**

From General Motors Diesel Limited:		From Montreal Locomotive Works:	
7246	February 3, 1958	3663, 3664	December 6, 1957
7247	February 5	3665, 3666	December 10
7248	February 7	3567, 3668	December 16
7249	February 14	3669	December 20

7250	February 21	3670	December 19
		3671, 3672	December 27
1292, 1293	February 26, 1958		
		8227	December 4, 1957
4228, 4229	February 7, 1958	8228	December 6
4230, 4231	February 10	8229	December 10
4232, 4233	February 12	8230	December 13
4234, 4235	February 18	8231	December 17
4236, 4237	February 19	8232	December 19
		8233	December 23
		8234	December 27

➤ **C.N.R. Locomotives Scrapped:**

2379	December 6, 1957	2427	December 13
2442	December 13	15825	December 20

T.T.C. NOTES

- All Kansas City PCCs have now entered Hillcrest Shops; about half the group had emerged at time of writing and was seeing service on the St. Clair and Earls court routes.
- The T.T.C. has consented to reroute the Bathurst carline in the downtown area when a one-way proposal for Richmond and Adelaide Streets goes into effect. The route now loops clockwise via Victoria, Richmond, Church and Adelaide. With the new system in effect Richmond will be a westbound street and Adelaide eastbound, and the cars will accordingly loop counter-clockwise via Adelaide, Church, Richmond and York. The change is expected to occur during May.
- Tenders have been called for an extension to the paint shop at Hillcrest.
- Certain PCC cars have been fitted with dual braking controls for instructional purposes. The instructor operates (if need arises) a push-button device to actuate the braking systems. Cars so fitted are indicated by a yellow disc on the front windshield near the run number. Cars 4001 and 4002 have been observed to be equipped in this fashion.
- The Engineering building, an annex of the old T.T.C. head office at 14 Front Street East is now undergoing demolition. This building is interesting in that it was the location for most of the planning and design work on the Yonge Street subway. The main building has not as yet been touched, and space on the ground floor has been rented out temporarily.
- Mr. H. N. Cobb, architect in charge of the C.N.R.'s Place Ville Marie project in Montreal has stated publicly that a subway system is essential for this city if it is to remain one of the leading commercial centres on the continent. The Montreal Transportation Commission has been very quiet on subway matters recently, and it seems that its only aim is to become the largest all-bus operator in North America.

End